Remembering The Latter Rain

By Violet Kiteley Jul 31, 2000

IN THE MID-1940S, DESPERATE SPIRITUAL HUNGER LAUNCHED AN INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT. WHAT WAS IT ABOUT, AND HOW DOES IT COMPARE TO CURRENT MOVES OF GOD?

During the mid-1940s renowned ministers such as Charles Price, Smith Wigglesworth and Aimee Semple McPherson individually stated that there was another major move of God's Holy Spirit on the horizon but that they were not going to be alive to see it. They also stated that although some of the so-called "activity of the Spirit" up until that time had been born of the flesh and had the resemblance of Ishmael, those who earnestly tarried for the next move would witness Isaac being born.

These prophecies came forth at a critical time in the life of the church when, during a season of spiritual drought, the groundwork was laid for an outpouring of the Spirit. God's visitation was perfectly orchestrated for the church at large, and it also came at a crucial time for me.

NEEDING A MIRACLE I was in my early 20s when I received the shocking news of my husband's death. He was killed in a fiery plane crash while serving in the Royal Canadian Air Force at the end of World War II.

Three months after the tragedy, my son was born. But because of the shock and trauma I'd sustained due to my husband's passing, within days of my son's birth, I became completely paralyzed and unable to care for him.

With a monthly war pension of only $75 to live on, things naturally seemed bleak and hopeless for us. Miracles were few and far between.

On Nov. 26, 1946, a missionary coming from Jordan was flying into my hometown of Vancouver, British Columbia, to preach in our local church, and he received a prophetic word while aboard the airplane. The Holy Spirit told him not to go to his hotel room until he went and prayed for a woman who had been paralyzed and told that she would never walk again.

The message to be delivered to me was that I would be raised up that very day and given a new message to preach around the world. My son also would be raised up to be a prophet and would carry the same message.

After the prophetic word was spoken to me, I immediately arose from the bed where I had been lying for 13 months, totally healed. I gave my testimony in my local church, and for the next 1-1/2 years, I preached throughout the region, sharing my story of receiving a miracle in the midst of tragedy.

One day as I was engaging in a desperate prayer session with God, I said, “Surely there must be something more than this.” That day an elderly sister came and gave a word regarding my ministry and my son that was similar to the word given by the missionary, but she specifically stated that I was to go to North Battleford, Saskatchewan, with my son and become immersed in a new movement that was being birthed by the Holy Spirit.

I submitted the word of the Lord to my pastors. They informed me that our traditional Pentecostal denomination had officially denounced this movement, which was referred to as “Latter Rain.”

The pastors wanted me to continue traveling, sharing my testimony of the miracle of healing and my story of coping with the tragedy of the loss of my husband. I was told that by going to the meetings I would be totally out of God’s will and would lose my authorization to share in any of their churches. But despite their warnings, I went, seeking to become immersed in the atmosphere and witness firsthand what God was doing.

WHAT WAS THIS NEW THING? God was pouring out His Spirit in a rural hamlet known as North Battleford, Saskatchewan. Even today, the location is scarcely known by Canadians outside the region.

In October 1947 a group of about 70 Bible school students in Canada began fasting and praying for an extended period, which lasted to mid-February 1948. There was a desperate hunger to see God make

the entire body of Christ fully functional rather than just raise up a small nucleus of high-profile, gifted leaders.

The ministry of signs, wonders and miracles was the primary focus of the founding leaders of the Latter Rain Movement. George Hawtin, P.G. Hunt, Milford Kirkpatrick, George Warnock and Ern Hawtin were particularly impacted by the preaching of William Branham, who functioned primarily in the word of knowledge for naming diseases and casting out evil spirits.

On February 13, 1948, a prophetic utterance was given regarding 1 Timothy 4:14: “Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed upon you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery” (NASB). The message said that this truth was being restored to the church at that very moment.

In essence, this meant that the gifts of the Spirit were not to be relegated to just the platform ministry. Every Spirit-filled believer was to find his or her place in the body of Christ. This place was to be confirmed through the laying on of hands by the presbytery, accompanied by personal directive prophecy through the office of the prophet.

Proponents of the Latter Rain believed that local churches should not make major decisions without receiving prophetic direction from proven prophetic ministers who were not part of the strategic planning or decision-making body of elders. They believed strongly that all new strategies had to be conceived by the Holy Spirit and not by man.

Prior to this time the gifts of the Spirit were mainly manifested in the form of tongues and the interpretation of tongues. But the messages were extremely repetitive and seriously lacking in revelation.

The new movement had a conviction from God that the offices of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher were being restored to the church. These were called to be the foundational ministries of the church, and their role was to undergird and push up from the bottom (see Eph. 4:11-13). This was, and still is, a revolutionary concept to denominations that advocate leadership from a centralized location and function with a top-down form of government.

EXPERIENCING THE VISITATION In 1948 people were drawn to an old, dilapidated Word War II hangar in an obscure location in subzero weather. There was no heater, only an old cook stove.

The services began daily at 5 a.m. and lasted 10 to 12 hours. No meals were served. This was before the days of television and computers, and there was no media coverage. Yet people came from all over Canada, the United States, New Zealand, Australia, Scandinavia, the British Isles and India.

Some people claimed they saw prophetic messages in the sky or had dreams and visions that led them to participate in this new movement. Some said they had supernaturally received the address and location of this outpouring and were compelled by the Holy Ghost to go and see for themselves.

The movement's founders never referred to this visitation of the Holy Spirit as the "Latter Rain." This was originally a term of derision intended to discredit the movement, which appeared to outsiders to be radical and extreme.

However, what I experienced through the "laying on of hands by the presbytery" and personal directive prophecy altered the course of my life. I was on my knees when I received a prophetic utterance that stated there would be "an immediate validation of the word spoken over [my] life and [my] son's life." The confirmation was to come in the form of "the operation of the miraculous."

When I got up, a woman was brought to me who had fallen on the ice and had a compound fracture with bones protruding out of the skin. She was experiencing unbearable pain, and when I put my hand on her, immediate visible healing took place.

My 3-year-old son was told to pray for a man in a wheelchair and command him to get out of his chair. When he did, the man immediately began walking.

That was the beginning of my family's prophetic ministry, which continues today, not only through my son, but through his son as well. It is a demonstration of the multigenerational anointing that is to be upon the end-time church.

Prophetic utterances came forth concerning the future of many historical churches. It was prophesied that the large cathedrals of the world, including those belonging to the Roman Catholic Church, would be filled to capacity with people receiving the Holy Spirit.

This was considered a bombshell to many who thought there was no way that the Holy Spirit would come upon those in the Catholic Church. But they were proven wrong as subsequent decades saw participation in the charismatic renewal by Catholics and mainline Protestants alike.

Prophetic words were given that worldwide evangelism would be accompanied by the miraculous and that God was going to impact the world through a new generation of leaders. In just a short period of time, the ministries of Billy Graham, Oral Roberts, A.A. Allen and T.L. Osborne began to emerge.

The prophetic song of the Lord occasionally broke out in the meetings. Scores of people, referred to as the “heavenly choir,” sang forth in earthly languages they had never learned.

There was a strong call for missionaries to go to the nations. A tremendous sense of urgency surrounded China because it was about to close its doors to the gospel. In fact, in 1949 all foreign missionaries were asked to leave China.

THE MOVEMENT LIVES ON One of the greatest miracles of the Latter Rain Movement is that there are still thousands of fellowships in existence today. Throughout the world they are referred to as “Restoration Churches,” and they continue to subscribe to those truths birthed during this move of the Holy Spirit.

The Latter Rain movement never became a denomination. Voluntary fellowship and accountability were maintained through trans-local checks and balances by proven traveling apostles and prophets who continually served independent local churches all over the world.

Recently, my son and I were sharing in a conference in California entitled, “Redigging the Wells of Revival.” During the gathering a number of Pentecostal denominational pastors came to the platform and in acts of representational repentance asked forgiveness for the role their denominations had played in attacking and denouncing the Latter Rain movement.

At a meeting in Canada, Cindy Jacobs, president of Generals of Intercession, called on the leaders of Pentecostal denominations who had rejected the Latter Rain movement 52 years ago to fall on their knees and repent so that the blessings that had been withheld from the Canadian provinces could be released.

In 1948 the movement was an immature infant and needed much refinement, and there were some seedbeds of error that needed to be purged. But there was also a tremendous deposit of God that is still affecting many Spirit-filled churches of all denominations today.

What was birthed in the Latter Rain movement is now receiving worldwide acceptance. Though many leaders in the late ’40s and early ’50s rejected this move of the Spirit, some of their descendants are now saying, “Let’s take a second look at the Latter Rain Movement. It just might have been God. Perhaps this is what we need today!”

Read a companion devotional.

Violet Kiteley is a prophetic teacher and founder of Shiloh Church in Oakland, California, a 4,000-member church made up of people from many different nations. Kiteley, who witnessed the Latter Rain Movement firsthand, has traveled extensively, planting churches and establishing Bible colleges in nations such as Ethiopia, the Philippines, Hong Kong and Japan, among others.